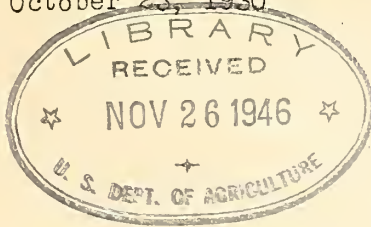


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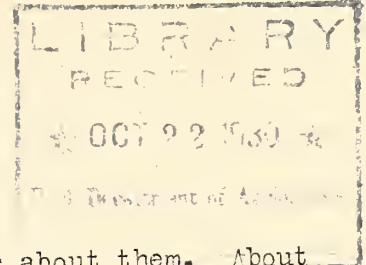
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Excerpt from a Radio Talk by  
W. W. Vincent, Chief, Western  
District, Food and Drug Administration,  
U. S. Department of Agriculture, through  
KGO and associated NBC stations, Thursday,  
October 23, 1930



## HOW TO READ THE LABEL

### Dried Fruits

Serial No. 20.



Prunes are a very common food - everybody knows about them. About 80% of the world's supply is produced in the United States, the bulk in California and Oregon, with some production in Southern Washington and Western Idaho. A prune is a plum, you know, - but not all plums are prunes. Prunes are simply those varieties of plums which can be dried with the pit in them without resulting souring or fermentation. The chief varieties grown in California are French prunes, Imperial prunes, and Sugar prunes. The very large sizes you buy are mainly Imperial and Sugar prunes. The Italian prune is most commonly grown in Oregon, although they grow some French prunes there. Southern Washington produces a few Italian prunes, which are generally sold along with the prunes of Oregon. A tip you might appreciate; The Oregon or Italian prune is generally larger than the French type of prune, and is more tart, contains a somewhat higher acid content and less sugar. Label readers will be interested to know that they are labeled Oregon Prunes. Coe's Golden Drop prune, commonly known and sold as the Silver prune, is a large yellow fruit. In its preparation, this prune is subjected to the fumes of burning sulphur, which in part gives it the beautiful golden color by which you may recognize it. These prunes go mainly to certain large eastern cities.

When you buy a pound of dried prunes, you get the equivalent of 2 1/2 to 3 pounds of fresh prunes as received for drying. When you read the labels on the prune cases next time, see if you find figures such as 30-40 or 60-70. These figures show how many prunes of that size it will take to weigh one pound. As a rule, the larger figure approximates more nearly the number to be found in a pound, since packers are more generous with smaller sizes. Smaller prunes sell for less money.

Now let's consider for a minute the so-called cut fruits - those from which the pits are removed, such as peaches, apricots, and nectarines. We shall also include pears, because after coring, pears are handled in a similar way. - You may want to know how these cut fruits are prepared for sale. First the packers split the fruit, then remove the pit. Then they put the fruit on trays and run these trays into small sulphur houses, where the fruit is exposed to the fumes of sulphur dioxide for a short time. This treatment helps to break up the cell structure of the fruit, thus speeding up evaporation of moisture. It also sets the natural color of the fruit and prevents darkening, with which you are probably familiar. When they take the trays of fruit from the sulphur house, they place them in the sunshine until the moisture content is reduced to a figure around 18 or 20 per cent. Then they put the fruit in lug boxes and convey it to the packing house. Then they run the fruit over sorters that sort it to size,

In this grading process, some concerns sort out most of the fruit that could be considered objectionable from the food standpoint. After grading - if the fruit is not to be packed immediately - they place it in storage containers until it is ready for use. But before they pack the fruit into boxes, they generally wash it in water, sort it again, and then subject it to the fumes of sulphur dioxide. Sulphuring, by the way, helps to brighten up the color of the fruit and, as I said before, keeps it from turning dark. Sulphuring also prevents any fermentation that might take place after the fruit leaves the packing house. Sulphur dioxide has certain preservative qualities and in limited amounts is not harmful to the consumer.

Now when you go to the store to buy dried peaches, apricots, pears, and nectarines, remember that size of fruit is the principal factor in setting its price. This is true, at least, in the so-called better grades. You will find the largest or finest dried fruits labeled Jumbo - the next grade as Extra Fancy - then Fancy - Extra Choice - Choice - and Standard. Fruit labeled Standard is the least desirable, since it is very small and generally not uniform in color, indicating a variation in ripeness,

There is still another grade of dried fruit, but you may not run across it. This kind of fruit is called Slabs. Slabs, of course, are not so attractive in appearance as the other grades I have mentioned, but from the taste standpoint, it is probably the best dried fruit produced, provided it is handled carefully throughout its preparation. Slabs are made from very ripe fruit of full sugar content. This fruit, having been so ripe, will not hold its shape when cut, or before it is cut, but flattens out in the drying tray.

I did not tell you the fresh fruit equivalents of all the dried fruits you buy at the store. Here are some of them: One pound of dried peaches or dried pears is equivalent to 5 pounds of fresh peaches and pears. One pound of dried apricots is equivalent to 5 1/2 pounds of fresh apricots. One pound of dried nectarines is equivalent to about 5 1/2 pounds of fresh nectarines. The average moisture content of these fruits as they leave the packing house is about 25%.

Just another word about the sulphur dioxide treatment. Some people do not want fruit that has been treated with sulphur fumes and some manufacturers, always alert to the public wants, sell unsulphured fruit, which is so labeled. But if your fruit has been subjected to sulphur dioxide treatment, you will always find that the labels say so. Unsulphured fruit is usually darker in appearance than sulphured fruit. There has been some discussion as to whether the sulphuring process is objectionable from the health standpoint. Without going into that in detail, I can say that extensive experiments show that sulphur dioxide used in the limited quantities in which it is ordinarily found in food products is not injurious to health. If sulphur used in these limited quantities were injurious to you, your Federal food and drugs act would not allow interstate traffic in sulphured fruit.